

Abusing human rights in the health care service under a soft dictatorship in Hungary

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When the brutality of World War II ended, the nation had to face the increasing brutality of encroaching Communism. The idea of building Socialism, which was forced upon us, arrived together with the disappearance of some people, with mass imprisonments of others and with mass deportations to labour camps.

Immediately after the war, young men, even young girls, were picked up from the streets and sent to labour camps in the USSR.

The permanent class-fighting, an essential feature of Communist ideology, and the permanent fear of being prosecuted, tortured and imprisoned became a routine part of the life of many ordinary people. During the early 1950s six hundred thousand people in my country were prosecuted or imprisoned. One was at risk of being beaten up, tortured and/or sent to a labour camp for no reason at all.

After crushing the revolution of 1956, the Communist regime quickly realised that brutality would not lead anywhere and they tried to soften the dictatorship. Some of the torturers became civil servants; we do not know how many. At the moment, we do not have any figures for the doctors who participated in torture but we know from certain reports that some of the torturers were taught how to administer professional, almost undetectable beatings by some leading doctors who were employed by the

secret police. It is only now that we are beginning to learn anything about this.

As is known from the newspapers, Hungary is experiencing rapid political changes and our country is trying to get rid of the remains of the so-called 'Socialist' values – of which the most important was the sharp reduction in life-expectancy at birth. We must introduce respect for human rights into our health care.

Torture probably ended a long time ago in my country, but now we have more sophisticated ways of abusing human rights – in the way we deliver health care. The falsification of morbidity and mortality figures; not paying attention to the so-called 'Capitalist' diseases like drug abuse and even AIDS; not talking about the hazards of environmental pollution – all this has prevented us from taking ameliorating and protective measures. Thanks to the political changes currently taking place, we now have the means and the willingness to explore the extent of the abuse of human rights in our health care system and to find those doctors who assisted the Socialist dictatorship in the performance of its antihuman activities.

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